Fort Davis National Historic Site

National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior



Curriculum Materials Grades 6-8

Student Activity: Readers' Theatre: One-Act Play

1874 JOURNEY OF AN OFFICER'S WIFE ON THE SAN ANTONIO-EL PASO ROAD

ONE-ACT PLAY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



In the summer of 1874, Colonel George L. Andrews, commander of the Twenty-fifth U. S. Infantry—a Buffalo Soldier regiment, returned to Fort Davis, Texas where he was serving as post commander. Accompanying the colonel were his new wife, Emily, and her teenage daughter, Maud, from a previous marriage.

In April of 1873, the colonel's first wife, Alice, had died in New York City. The colonel had remained back East to settle

her estate and to visit with his only son, George, a cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point. It was during this period that the colonel courted Emily. The couple was married in Portland, Maine on May 13, 1874, and soon afterwards the colonel began to make preparations for bringing his new family to the frontier.

The Andrews party journeyed by ship to the Texas coast and then by rail to Austin-which, at the time, had a population of 12,000. At Austin, an escort of Buffalo Soldiers (25th Infantry, the colonel's regiment) from Fort Davis met them. Under the command of Lieutenant Henry Landon, the escort contained two non-commissioned officers (NCOs), ten troopers, three six-mule teams, four mules for the "private ambulance of Colonel Andrews, and the necessary camp equipage."

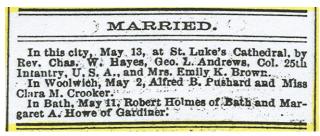
They traveled to Fort Davis along the Austin-Fredericksburg stage road and the San Antonio-El Paso Road. Mrs. Andrews and Maud rode in an army ambulance, which was a common form of transportation for officers' families at the time; it was a stout wagon with leather seats and a canvas top. A light wagon carried their servants, and there were other army wagons to carry the family's household goods—including a piano. They departed Austin on Aug. 10 and arrived at Fort Davis on September 8.

The second Mrs. Andrews kept a detailed diary of her journey from Austin to Fort Davis written in the form of a letter to her father. In the diary, Mrs. Andrews described many of the experiences common to military wives on the frontier after the Civil War. Mrs. Andrews viewed the frontier through the eyes of a middle-class, eastern-raised woman, and her account provides an interesting picture of the late 19th-century West. Her original forty-three page diary is preserved in the Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas.

To piece together a historical story, historians use many different items. Below are some primary sources that tell us about Colonel and Mrs. Andrews.

At eleven o'clock yesterday morning Mrs. Emily R Brown, daughter of Hon. H. K. Oliver of Salem, and daughter-in-law of Hon. J. B. Brown of this city. was married to Colonel George L. Andrews, of the 25th Infantry, U. S. A. At the conclusion of the ceremony the newly married couple started on a wedding tour up the Hudson.

Portland Daily Press, May 14, 1874 Page 2



Portland Daily Press, May 14, 1874 Page 3

- 1. The above articles are wedding announcements for Colonel Andrews and Emily Brown. Old newspapers often give historians information about people in history. Read both wedding notices from a newspaper in Portland, Maine, and make a list of things you have learned about Colonel and Mrs. Andrews.
- 2. The next two pages are copies of a letter that the new Mrs. Andrews wrote to her father in Maine, telling him about her trip to Texas. These letters and entries from her diary help to give us a picture of life and travel to Texas in 1874. Have you ever kept a diary or journal? Staple several sheets of paper together or use a notebook, begin your journal and write a journal entry telling about a day in your life.
- 3. Everyone loves stories. Many authors and playwrights take historical events from primary sources and create a story or play everyone can enjoy. The following play was written by Mary Williams, National Park Service historian at Fort Davis National Historic Site. With your classmates, produce and present this play for your class or another class. Use props or costumes, if you like. Have fun making history come alive!

Gerning "Oripking Springs In Camp Sugt. 11.1874 streling pure that some little account of our trip through I byas, would be entertainmig to you, I have tried to note down each days doings, aled perecette send them to you! Accessorily this has often how wither in the gratect hung, wither when just mady for a start in the more nig, or when tried and sleepy after a long days march, is you must nad with the gradest lement ing. I must go back to the starting of yesterday, before I lig to describe to you this strange seems, us it appears to me this morning Me were all up bright and early intending to be If I eight o'clock, het at the last morecul probletting mas formed to be out of order with new of the wagnesses that we were detained tell it was nine before me left the Hotel. The people of Austin (the most of whom seem to han nothing to do) stood in crowds to see us start. The feel rodo a head on his famile "Billy" nest followed the "audulance" with Mand and myself mide, and two records out, then a light wagen with the other sewants,

and finally the army magous brought up the margender the care of Luis Landons. Me made a good many forced in austin, and the balency was quite full of ladies and quellemen, to On leaving from the fruit event was the crossmig of the Bolorado Revie, which we expedit to do on a finetoon bridge, but this was destroyed a short lines pines by the pudden vise of the viore, to ar write lettle farthump, hoping to fried the rope fury in order, hus ur found no freez-man, to back un bandered to the ford! The water was clear and bright, and as nor Alop. ped in the middle of the straw to water the muley, while I looked up and down at the various teams crossing back and forth, I wondered what you all would say at home at the most right? If had been such a long period of punchine that the road for some miles was very dusty, but the day was Cool, and a high wind blew it awar from ug, so we had my little amingance from it. The Country is polling, many of the hill sides our which we passed seemed to be a mais of rocks, and as the braks we put on to allo the ambulance to plide slowly down the sligh places. I fairly held my brath; I cante to the conclusion known hat there was our little flaver u of its lifeting one, take-